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## NOW AND THEN IN AMERICA.

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GLANCING lately over a column of humorous items in a New York journal, I was struck by the pithy remark that an Englishman visiting the United States for the first time "writes up" the whole country in ten minutes; whereas a Frenchman compiles a voluminous account of American institutions and manners without ever having visited America at all. The statement may be somewhat paradoxical; but, as often happens with paradoxes, it contains a certain substratum of truth. English travelers on this vast continent are generally in as desperate a hurry to record in print their impressions of what they have seen as they have been to gather such impressions; and the result of this over-haste in seeing and writing is, naturally, confusion. In a neighboring republic they have a story about the agent of an English insurance company who, once upon a time, was sent out to Mexico to investigate the causes of a fire, compensation for which was claimed by the insured parties. He landed at Vera Cruz—in which city the fire had occurred—on Christmas eve, say in the year 1870. With due diligence he made his inquiries; and, these being ended, he was able to avail himself of a homeward-bound steamer, which left Vera Cruz for Havana on the 2d of January, 1871. Six weeks after his return to England he published a brace of very handsome octavo volumes, with the comprehensive title, "Mexico in 1870-'71." This may be taken, perhaps, as a fair sample of the practice of "writing up" a country in ten minutes. I do not say that such a "lightning-express" system is adopted by all English tourists in the United States. Observant travelers, thoughtful travelers, patient travelers, conscientious travelers, have come hither time and again from the shores of Great Britain. It is very probable, for instance, that Mr. Thackeray could have said, had he so chosen, a great deal that would have been cogent and pertinent concerning the great country in which

he had been so splendidly received, and the society in the most enlightened circles of which he was so cordially welcomed : only, Mr. Thackeray never chose to say anything whatever on the subject ; and his silence was judiciously accepted as golden. Had the dream of his life been realized, and had he obtained a diplomatic appointment at Washington, the world might have been favored in time with a conspectus of American society from the pen of William Makepeace Thackeray as exhaustive and as impartial as the conspectus of American politics produced more than forty years since by Alexis de Tocqueville. As it is, few, I should say, will accuse Mr. Froude, or Mr. Anthony Trollope, or Mr. Goldwin Smith, or the late Mr. Maguire—although the last-named publicist only dealt with the condition of the Irish in America—with having “written up” the United States in ten minutes. On the other hand, I should be stupidly indifferent to or ignorant of the current literature of my own country were I not able to recall scores of books published in England during the last twenty years and written more or less on the “ten-minutes” principle. A young English peer or guardsman arrives here with an indistinct notion that it will be “awfully jolly” to see some buffalo and grizzly-bear shooting somewhere out West. Out West he goes, scampering thither and scampering back ; and directly he is safe again in Pall Mall he, or his wife—if Nimrod has been fortunate enough to find a spouse who is a mighty huntress before the Lord, and does not shrink from accompanying him on his expedition—courts public favor with a bulky tome, beautifully printed and picturesquely illustrated, with some such attractive title, it may be, as “Bisons and Bonanzas,” or “Grizzly Bears and Greenbacks,” or “Terrapin and the Tariff.” Alliteration’s artful aid is invaluable in choosing a title for a book of travels. Again, a gentleman who thinks that he is a genius, and whose friends in England have been telling him for years that he has only to set foot in New York to be at once and unanimously acclaimed as the greatest of living geniuses, arrives here per Cunard or White Star steamship with his library or his scientific lecture, his “entertainment,” his panorama, his white mice, or what not, prepared to have his olfactory organs titillated with any amount of incense, and to make fifty thousand dollars by a few months’ lecturing or “entertaining” tour. Speedily he may discover, to his astonishment and dismay, that the American people have heard little, and that they care less, about him ; and that at the moment they are far too much occupied by or in-

terested in Mr. Edison's discoveries, or the recent sale of New York Central stock, or Mr. Talmage and his presbytery, or the Maine election problem, or the "Frog Opera and Pollywog Chorus," to care one dime about him or his lecture, his "entertainment," his panorama, or his white mice. The man of genius goes home, minus the fifty thousand dollars which he had expected to realize, and in dudgeon. Ere long an *opusculum* appears from his pen: "Bowery Boys and Buckwheat Cakes"; "Wall Street and Waffles"; "Democracy and Delmonico's," or the like; and not unfrequently his "ten minutes'" impressions of a country which contains more than forty-five millions of people, and of which his path has covered only a very few square miles, are colored and disagreeably colored by the feelings of disappointment not unnaturally excited within his breast by the failure of the American people to appreciate him, his genius, his lectures, his panorama, or his white mice, as the case may be. After all, he may not be, when you come to read between the lines of that which he has written, a much more untrustworthy traveler than he who comes to the State with a ponderous budget of letters of introduction to the "first families," who is "put through" and passed on from agreeable coterie to agreeable coterie, be these fashionable, literary, artistic, or especially religious coteries; who lives at the best clubs and the best restaurants; who goes out to three or four balls or receptions, or tea-fights, or prayer-meetings every night; who is charmed with everything and everybody that he has met with, and who goes home to write a book in raptures: picturing America as a terrestrial paradise, and the Americans as only a little lower—if, indeed, they are not a little higher—than the angels. There is not much to choose, it strikes me, between the unreliability of too rosily-colored spectacles and of eye-glasses tinted to the hue of the yellow jaundice. But perhaps the most objectionable type of the Englishman who "writes up" the United States in ten minutes is the individual who arrives here as the temporary correspondent of a London newspaper. Our journals maintain permanent correspondents, sometimes regular and sometimes occasional, in the great transatlantic cities—writers who have been in the country for years, who have made a careful study of American politics, and who may claim to possess some substantial knowledge of the good and evil qualities, the manners and the idiosyncrasies of the nation among whom they have been for such a length of time domiciled. But in the midst of these experts there suddenly drops down a gentleman from Fleet Street or the Strand, bristling all over with pre-

judices, pachydermatous as to what is said about him, and utterly indifferent to the pain which the shafts of his ridicule or his misrepresentations may inflict on the American epidermis, and bound to fill so many columns of his newspaper at home, during his short stay in America, with his "impressions" touching a country and a people concerning which and whom he knows considerably less than he does of the political opinions and domestic economy of the savage hill tribes with whom we are fighting in Afghanistan. He may have just come from Afghanistan, whither he had been sent from Zululand or from St. Petersburg or from Constantinople. He does more harm, probably, during his "ten minutes" than is done by the mere simpleton and the disappointed genius with the lecture, the panorama, or the white mice. The simpleton and the showman wait until they get home before they inflict their books on the public; they have some time for reflection, should they happen to be capable of reflecting; and they can correct the proofs of what they have written ere their lucubrations assume the unchangeable livery of stereotype. The newspaper correspondent sees no proofs, and has rarely even the patience to read over the manuscript which falls from his rapid pen. His watch may be lying before him on the desk at which he is writing, for he is bound to "catch" the mail which goes out on the following morning. Visitors call to weary and exasperate him with futile small-talk. So soon as he is free from their importunities, he must resume his pen; so many sides of "copy" must be scribbled over, come what may; and a few hours afterward he casts his budget of blunders on the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, for the printing-press and the world to find the *farrago* after eleven days. I am able to speak somewhat feelingly of the mistakes of which such a correspondent may be guilty, and somewhat remorsefully of the mischief which he may do if the newspaper with which he corresponds happens to be one of vast circulation and great influence, because I have been, myself, the special correspondent of a great London newspaper for more than twenty-two years, and have frequently experienced the difficulty of having to make bricks without straw.

I arrived in the harbor of New York on Wednesday, the 26th of November, 1879; and ere I had been in the city thirty-six hours I had pledged myself to write a paper on things transatlantic for the "North American Review." Terminating this article now, on the morrow of Christmas, I am acutely sensible of the fact that I have been in the United States of America just one month. During the greater

portion of that time I have resided in New York City ; but I have likewise made brief excursions to Baltimore, to Philadelphia, and to Washington. In the face of this deliberately candid confession it may appear to a youthful reader of these pages—or a reader who knows nothing of me as an English journalist, and may never even have heard my name pronounced in his life before—that it is an act of the grossest impertinence on my part to say anything about a country in which I am, figuratively speaking, a mere babe and suckling. Most of us have heard the story of the skipper who made this entry in his log : “Passed Cape Donahoo, twelve miles S. S. E. ; natives kind and hospitable.” When taxed by his owner with the imaginative character of this entry, he very fairly pleaded that certain natives of Cape Donahoo had put off in a canoe and boarded his craft ; that they had brought him gifts of pigs and plantains ; and that, as they had not stolen anything nor fish-speared anybody, he was entitled to laud their kindness and their hospitality. My plea in extenuation must be analogous to that advanced by the skipper in the story. Of America in 1879-’80 I necessarily know not much more than the master-mariner knew of Cape Donahoo ; but from a remote offing there has put forth a canoe teeming with certain memories of the past—memories of the America which I had excellent opportunities to study during thirteen months from November, 1863, to December, 1864. I have been here before, and that is why I am so venturesome as to head this paper with the title “Now and Then in America.”

I arrived in this country when it was in the midst of a bloody war, all the more terrible and the more embittered because it was a war between brethren. Exasperation characterized the combatants on either side ; but in one particular they were agreed—in that of distrusting the Englishman. At home our own Lancashire operatives were starving in consequence of the cotton famine ; our own councils were divided ; Northern and Southern sympathizers quarreled at dinner-tables, or reviled each other in print or at public meetings ; Earl Russell, one of the truest and usefulest Liberals that ever lived, had publicly declared that the North were fighting “not for Union but for empire” ; and while the great mass of the intelligent working classes in England undeniably believed in the justice of the Northern cause—a cause defended with all the sturdiness and all the eloquence of John Bright—it was as undeniably accepted as “the proper thing” in polite English society to manifest either active or sentimental sympathy

for the Confederates. "Maryland ! my Maryland," was a far more popular ditty in upper-class English drawing-rooms than "John Brown"; and the more emotional sections of the lower grades in the community agreed for once in a while with their superiors in station. A precisely similar phenomenon has been visible in English politics within the last three years. "Jingoism"—that is to say, a bellicose hatred of Russia—has been the creed of the aristocracy, of the military class, and of the state Church; and has found disciples as fervent among emotional mobs and half-instructed readers of the outpourings of emotional newspapers; while anti-Jingoism—that is, a sincere love of peace, and a persistent refusal to believe that the Emperor Alexander of Russia is an ogre, a vampire, and the giant Fee-faw-fum, continually smelling the blood of an Englishman—has been the faith of the English Puritans, as represented by Mr. Bright, of the majority of the non-conforming religious communities, represented by Dr. Parker and Mr. Spurgeon, and of really Liberal peers and members of Parliament, represented by the Dukes of Argyll and Westminster, the Earl of Rosebery, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir William Harcourt, and Mr. Forster, and such truly genuine Liberal journals as the "Daily News" and the "Spectator," who have not hesitated to denounce Jingoism and "Imperialism," and the cutting-your-neighbor's-throat policy, at the risk of being denounced as "Anglo-Russians," "British Afghans," "St. James's Hall traitors," and the like, because they have failed to perceive the expediency of keeping a nation, whose business is peace, manufactures, and commerce, in a perpetual war ferment, or the necessity for shooting so many thousands of Russians, or hanging so many hundreds of Afghans, in order to keep a Tory Government in Downing Street. From this list of politicians I have designedly excluded the revered name of Mr. Gladstone, for the reason that I have been attempting to draw a parallel—and the drawing of a political parallel is always a perilous thing—between the conflict of opinions which divided my country in 1863 and that which distracts it in 1879; and Mr. Gladstone's political character and moods of mind do not lend themselves to the drawing of any parallels whatsoever. Geometricians know how many kinds of lines there are; and William Ewart Gladstone may be politically qualified as neither straight nor curved. He is a mixed line.

I have said enough, perhaps, to show that the position of an Englishman who came to the United States seventeen or eighteen years ago was, if he had any sort of "mission," or if he acted in any-

thing approaching a public capacity, an extremely invidious one. I remember forty years ago, when I first went to school in Paris, that I was constantly and contumeliously reproached by my French schoolmates with the crimes committed by my country against France in the year 1815. I used to be held personally responsible, to the extent of being called opprobrious names, and of having my hair pulled, my toes trodden upon, and my peg-top confiscated, for the occupation of Paris by the allied armies, the non-arrival of Grouchy instead of Blücher on the field of Waterloo, the spoliation of the art-treasures of the Louvre, and the deportation of Napoleon to St. Helena. I was warned that a signal and sanguinary reparation for these outrages would sooner or later be exacted by indignant Gaul. Thus in 1863-'64 an Englishman newly landed on this continent, although he might be courteously and hospitably received in American society—I remember very well that I was so received—was continually being reminded of his country's sins of omission and commission against the Federal Government and people, and of the imminence of a retributory Nemesis. The rendition of Mason and Slidell, the buccaneering exploits of the Alabama, the blockade-running transactions by which Liverpool was enriching herself, the alleged subscriptions of British capitalists to Confederate loans—all these were things which were assumed to lie heavy on the Englishman's conscience ; all these were taken to be acts of national malfeasance on our part, for which we should eventually have to make reparation. And reparation we did eventually make ; but that fact did not make the Englishman's position one whit less uneasy while the strife continued. It might be urged that the most sensible attitude to be observed by a foreigner under such circumstances was one of entire neutrality. It was more than difficult—it was next door to impossible—to be neutral. When William Cobbett, a thorough-going radical, was here in the last years of the last century, the impossibility of preserving neutrality between contending parties, and the irritation which he felt at finding his own country continually attacked, goaded him at last into professing principles of the highest Toryism, and filling his shop-window with portraits of George III., his family, and his ministers whom, nearly so soon as he had got back to England, and had resumed his thorough-going radical frame of mind again, he proceeded and continued, during the next thirty years, with unceasing vehemence to denounce. The neutrality difficulty was sufficient in 1863-'64 to convert many a genuine English Liberal temporarily resident on



American soil into a Peter Porcupine. Those English Liberals who staid at home were in much better case. They could judge the vexed question from afar off, impartially and philosophically.

Those who can remember from month to month, and from day to day almost, the social episodes of the most terrific political struggle of the nineteenth century, may not contradict me when I say that the baleful effects of that struggle were scarcely perceptible on the surface of society in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. In Washington you were constrained to remember that a war was going on, and that it was raging close to the gates of the Federal capital; for you could scarcely leave Alexandria ere you found yourselves in the midst of war; and you could not travel half a dozen miles without hearing rumors—not dark and distant, but near and articulate—of guerrillas and “bushwhackers.” Washington and Baltimore again swarmed with the Federal troops, and the hospitals were crowded with wounded men. The trades of the embalmer and the maker of artificial limbs and eyes were flourishing; and the shop-windows were full of the ghastliest imaginable photographs of scenes of carnage and rapine. But coming North and East, and especially to New York, little beyond the holiday-making, the fifing and drumming, and banner-waving aspects of war were visible. The sanitary fairs held in aid of the beneficent work carried on among the Federal troops by the Sanitary Commission were festivals as brilliant, and were attended by as sparkling an array of feminine loveliness and elegance, as any that I witnessed lately at the peaceful fair of the Seventh Regiment at their armory in Lexington Avenue. Every day, almost, you heard the sounds of martial music, or saw the march-past of some regiment of dark-blue-coated volunteers, chanting, it might be, in unison, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe’s magnificent “*Grido di Guerra*”—I quote from memory :

“For mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where his grapes of wrath are stored;  
I have seen the fitful lightnings of his terrible swift sword—  
For God is marching on!”

This looked like war—bloody, bold, and resolute—in 1863: but in the middle of last month I was in Philadelphia; and I watched the eight miles and eight hours long parade in honor of General U. S. Grant. I saw battalions of the old dark-blue-gabardined veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, and the old battle-tattered

regimental flags ; and, to my mind, the parade of Peace was quite as glittering and imposing as the parade of War had been seventeen years ago ; and (again to my mind) it was a great deal more satisfactory than the war parade of 1863, because I knew that nobody was going to be killed ; and I have in my time seen too much of war, face to face—not as a soldier, who can earn laurels, and guerdon, and pensions on the tented field, but as a humble camp-follower and scribe about whom nobody is troubled, should he happen to get hanged or shot, or to die of fever or dysentery—not in my inmost heart and soul to hate and loathe war, its dirt and disease, and squalor and depravity ; its unutterable fertility in anguish, its immeasurable wealth of wickedness. Yet “carnage is God’s daughter.” The poet has told us so ; the experience of history has confirmed his dictum ; and the poet, although often and unjustly calumniated as “an unpractical person,” is, in the long run, generally right.

When I recur to my text of “Now and Then” in America, and especially when I mark the wonderful increase in the area and the population of the city of New York which has taken place since my first visit ; when I reflect that in my time Washington Square was a considerable way “up town,” that Fourteenth Street was as fashionable as our Eaton Place, Belgravia, and that a few blocks above the Fifth Avenue Hotel the *ultima Thule* of patrician New York was almost reached, my astonishment is considerably lessened by the remembrance that a corresponding augmentation and development have taken place in London and in Paris ; and that we led tolerably comfortable and luxurious lives in the London of 1863, when we had no Holborn Viaduct, no Midland Grand Hotel, no underground railway, no Northumberland Avenue, no Criterion Restaurant, and very little South Kensington or West Tyburnia, and when in Paris we had no new Academy of Music, no Avenue de l’Opéra, no Rue du Quatre Septembre, no electric light, and especially no Atlantic cable in either country. There is more New York and there are more New-Yorkers now than there were then ; just as there are more gray hairs in my head and wrinkles on my face ; but I had plucked out the first gray hair and noticed the first apparition of crow’s-feet before I came hither, and, to my thinking, society, or so much of it as existed, enjoyed itself quite as much then as it does now. The late Mr. A. T. Stewart’s marble palace and his superb picture-gallery were yet to come ; still, there were private gentlemen and merchant princes in New York who pos-

sessed palatial mansions and splendid picture-galleries, in which you could feast your eyes on the masterpieces of Gérôme and Rosa Bonheur and Meissonier, of Church and Bierstadt, of Crawford and Powers. Seventeen years ago a dear friend of mine occupied a suite of rooms in University Building, copious in pictures and statuary, and old china and bronzes. I see no difference in him—chiefly, perhaps, because I fail to discern much difference between my present and my former self, abating some trifling changes connected with the use of spectacles, and disinclination to write editorials after dinner—and I see no difference in his rooms, save that he has got more pictures, more statuary, more old china, more bronzes, and enamels, and *tazze* of jade and malachite. So in particulars, so in generals. I behold in degree the same New York; only I behold it through the large instead of the small end of an opera-glass. I read of sumptuous entertainments, in the decorations for which so many hundreds of dollars have been spent in rare flowers, and of the feasting attendant on which so many more dollars have been paid to a caterer *à la mode*; while the remuneration of the Teutonic instrumentalists discoursing the dance-music has been on a corresponding scale of magnificence. I read of cohorts of faultlessly dressed young gentlemen, and of bright bands of beauteous young ladies, the latter clad in dresses of rainbow hues and with inconceivably gorgeous trimmings, all made either by the world-famous Worth or by those Franco-American *modistes*, the Madame Anybodies, who have descended upon New York as “the great bird, the ruche,” described by Burton, descended on the plains of Madagascar to batten on the fat of the land, and who, each of them—if they collect their bills with regularity, and make no bad debts—ought to realize at least fifty thousand dollars a year. I am told that each of these sublime ball-dresses costs from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars. I go to Tiffany’s and am permitted to gaze upon the dazzling gems which are to be worn in conjunction with the sublime ball-dresses. This pearl necklace, the obliging assistant tells me, is worth six thousand pounds sterling. This diamond bracelet is cheap at twenty-five thousand dollars. I am pleased but not astounded, not overwhelmed, by the information—I have seen so many diamonds, so many ball-dresses, so many grand entertainments, the whole world over, so many years past. Only there are more pomps and vanities, and more diamonds and flowers, and suppers and *cotillons* in the New York of 1879-’80 than there were in the New York of 1863-’64. The sailor in the

story longed for all the grog and 'baccy in the world, and then—more 'baccy. And then he woke up from his longing, like Al-naschar from his dreams, to find that he had nothing at all. Persons of a timid, or a desponding, or a cynical turn of mind are apt to infer that this continuous and tremendous accretion of luxury and display, be it in London, in Paris, or in New York, must end in explosion or in collapse, and ultimately in cataclysm ; but such pessimists might do well to remember that metropolitan splendor and luxury are only phenomenal, and that we have come to attach a thoroughly abnormal and erroneous signification to the English rendering of the Greek word *φαινόμενον*, which really and simply is only the *φυσικόν*—a physical thing, plainly manifest, and therefore noteworthy.

It may be difficult for the cosmopolitan traveler, when he surveys the height of luxury which has been attained by affluent and refined New York, to avoid a comparison between the Empire City of the United States and the capital of the Russian Empire. Between New York and St. Petersburg there are, indeed, many remarkable points of similarity. Both cities are the paradise of foreign singers and musicians, cooks, confectioners, florists, caterers, and dancing-masters. The cost of elegant life in Petropolis is on a parity with that in Manhattan. In both cities the monetary unity represents a larger value than it does in the older centers of civilization. In England, that unity is substantially not the pound but the shilling sterling. In Paris it is the franc. Thus London is, on the whole, a dearer city than Paris by twenty-five centimes over and above the franc. We send a pound to a London charity or pay a pound a day for our parlor at a London hotel. To the same purposes in Paris we devote twenty francs. It might be argued that in New York the same theory of expenditure would be represented by a five-dollar piece ; but the American monetary unity is not five dollars, but one ; and, to a thousand intents and purposes, the purchasing power of the dollar in New York does not exceed that of the Parisian franc or the London shilling. In St. Petersburg the unity is the ruble, which should be worth seventy-five cents, but which may be assessed at about fifty. I never make bets, but, did I ever hazard any, I would confidently wager that living in quiet and undemonstrative comfort in New York, indulging in no excess, either in the direction of stately apartments, rare wines, or choice cigars, and hiring a carriage only when I absolutely needed one, I should spend every day nearly twice as much as I should spend in London or Paris, and only

about one third more than I should spend in St. Petersburg. This question of the relative costliness of life in great capitals is assuredly a very important one, although it is often contemptuously neglected as unworthy the attention of serious essayists on political economy. But, as Mr. Carlyle pointed out long ago, mankind is very prone to dismiss as trivial and unimportant subjects which are really of immediate and lasting concern to us all. Take the passion of sleep, for example. Once at least in the course of every twenty-four hours on an average, humanity is bound to "assume the horizontal position" and to retain that position for many hours, quite unconscious of business, pleasure, peace, or war, and "its head full of the foolishness of thoughts." General and continuous insomnia for a fortnight would make an end of humanity altogether; yet we trouble ourselves very little about the psychology of sleep; and the metaphysician has a great deal more to say about the soul, of which he can know absolutely nothing, than about sleep, and especially about dreams, concerning which he must have every night in his life practical and curious experience. So is it in a measure as respects the cost of our eating and drinking; and I know no more intricate problem than that of the excessive expensiveness of New York as compared with that of other great cities. We know why food, with the single exception of bread, is dear in London. The trade in meat, fish, poultry and game, fruit and vegetables is mainly in the hands of wealthy and powerful monopolists; we are ill supplied with markets; almost every article of food which we consume passes through the hands of and yields a profit to three or four middlemen before it reaches our mouths. Is this the case to a greater or to a lesser extent in New York? I should say, under correction, that it is not the case; that is, if I am to place any faith in the published price-lists of the markets from day to day. Those lists tell me that meat, fish, poultry, game, fruit, vegetables, and dairy produce are at least thirty per cent. cheaper in New York than in London; yet the retail prices of such articles which the guest at a first-class hotel or restaurant in New York is called upon to pay are at least forty per cent. above the charges which would be made for similar articles in analogous establishments in London. At our most fashionable watering-places, for example, Brighton and Scarborough, first-class board can be obtained at from eight to ten shillings—two to two and a half dollars—a day; but, if my American guide-books and my "Dictionary of New York" are trustworthy authorities, two dollars and a half here represent only board of a decidedly sec-

ond-class character. Again, while I can readily understand that so long as the American tariff—which I am afraid will outlive Mr. Thomas Bayley Potter, M. P., and all save the youngest members of the Cobden Club—remains the law of the land, imported articles must be very costly, I am at a loss to comprehend why articles of common use and manifestly of American manufacture should not be cheap. In particular am I amazed at the inordinate charges made for the hire of hackney-carriages. Your horses are plentiful and strong ; you have as many expert drivers as you want ; you are becoming the best carriage-builders in the world ; horse-feed is twenty-five per cent. cheaper with you than with us : why, in the name of common sense, am I to be forced to pay a dollar—or four shillings and twopence sterling—for riding over a distance of one mile ? It is quite true that I may continue to ride in the same cab for an entire hour, paying no more than one dollar ; but, suppose that I and my wife are invited to dinner just round the corner or a few blocks' distance from our residence, and that I do not wish to expose a lady to the risk of catching cold by tramping over this space through snow or mud, why should I pay four shillings and twopence for that which in England I should pay just one shilling or twenty-five cents for ? You may reply that I am free to take the street-cars or the Broadway stages, or that I may avail myself of the facilities of your wonderful elevated railroads. But I deferentially reply that I am a foreigner, that I am a stranger in your city ; that, although you paint the names of your streets on your corner-lamps—a very admirable system, so far as the night-time is concerned, and one which we might advantageously adopt in London—you do not affix the names of your streets conspicuously at the corners thereof ; and, finally, I respectfully plead that, if I have a visit to pay in a certain street and at a certain house, I prefer being driven in a cab straight up to the door of that house to being landed from the car or the staircase of an elevated railway-station right in the middle of the snow or the slush.

I can not dismiss the question of personal expenditure without noticing one or two more points which may be worthy of remark and explanation, and which I shall put interrogatively. We have usually noticed in England that where an article of consumption—bread always excepted—reaches, through some accidental or some inevitable circumstance, an excessive price, the tendency of the article is to retain that excess in price long after the circumstances which led to its aggravation in value have been aggravated. Does

such a rule—for it may fairly be called a rule—obtain here? When I came to America in November, 1863, gold was, if I remember aright, at eighty premium—that is to say, for every hundred dollars of gold value in my letter of credit my bankers credited me with one hundred and eighty dollars in paper currency. I think that ere I went away the premium on gold reached one hundred and sixty—I have even heard that it once touched one hundred and eighty; and, as the rate of gold varied from day to day, so did the prices of articles of consumption fluctuate. The figures of restaurant tariffs were subject to continual mutation; and, until you had the bill of fare before you, it was impossible to tell how much you would have to pay for your beefsteak or your mutton-cutlet. So was it with other commodities. I remember paying as much as three dollars for a pair of best Dent's (London) kid gloves, but that price to me did not mean twelve shillings and sixpence sterling. Gold being say at one hundred premium, I only really paid six shillings and threepence for my gloves—an advance of about thirty per cent. over what I should have paid in Piccadilly, London; and I had not the slightest reason to grumble in this connection, remembering, as I was bound to do, that the United States revenue was entitled to its toll, and the importer and retailer were entitled to their respective profits. But on the instant (December, 1879), if I go to a fashionable hosier on Broadway, New York, and ask him for a pair of the best Dent's (London) kid gloves, he charges me two dollars, which, at the present rate of exchange, means eight shillings and fourpence sterling, whereas in Piccadilly, London, I can still buy the same gloves at the old price of four shillings—that is, one dollar. My contention is, that prices in America have not retained precisely the same swollen proportions which they reached when the inflation of the currency during the war was at its highest, but that they have not decreased in anything approaching a corresponding ratio with the gradual equalization of paper currency with gold. Things, owing to the inevitable circumstances of the war, became dear, and dear they have remained—not so costly as they once were, but still a great deal costlier than, according to the doctrines of sound political economy, they should be. It may be, again, paradoxical to assert that the prices of commodities are as imitative in their nature as human beings are. But such seems to be the case, since I note a marked spirit on the part of native American manufacturers to imitate, so far as they can, the high prices of imported goods.

There are possibly few things more curiously interesting to a

stranger in America—when that stranger has been in the country before—than to observe the strong disinclination which is felt by the people at large to make use in the daily transactions of life of a metallic currency. Specie payments, we all know, have been resumed ; and the United States Treasury has accumulated an enormous reserve in gold ; but the public still cling with apparent fondness to their old greenbacks, and not only prefer a five-dollar bill to a five-dollar gold-piece, but (so it strikes me) would much rather have a one-dollar note than a dollar in silver. I grant that the latter is, albeit a handsome, somewhat of a cumbrous coin. In England we contumeliously call our five-shilling pieces, which are even more cumbrous specimens of mintage, “cartwheels,” and make haste to change them, whenever we have involuntarily taken them, for smaller currency ; but when did you ever hear a Frenchman complain of having a pocketful of five-franc pieces ? And the five-franc piece is to all intents and purposes your dollar. A Frenchman has a modified respect for a note of the Bank of France for twenty francs ; but bills for smaller denominations he utterly loathes—remembering the unredeemed *assignats* of 1793—and from the bottom of his soul abhors. In England we admire and revere the five-pound Bank of England note and its higher denominations ; but an attempt to force a currency of one-pound notes or of five-shilling notes on the nation in time of peace would lead to a revolution. No Londoner will have anything to do with an Irish one-pound note, or for one issued by the few provincial banks which are still authorized to emit such securities. We believe only in gold, silver, and “flimsies,” or notes above the value of five pounds. The American does not seem to care for gold, and he seems to dislike a silver coinage in the higher denominations intensely. I have been more than once reminded by American friends to whom I have mentioned the (to me) puzzling persistence with which printed promises to pay, instead of solid bullion, are adhered to, that the public have yet to be educated to the employment of a metallic currency, and that there are millions of young Americans of both sexes who until they were fourteen or fifteen years old had never set eyes on an American gold or silver coin. But I remember to have read that in the beginning of this century we in England, during the continuance of our great wars with France, a period of about fifteen years, were afflicted with an irredeemable paper currency—never, however, of a lower denomination than twenty shillings, for we had always plenty of silver, and that the general disfavor with



which the suspension of cash payments was regarded found its embodiment in a song which obtained immense popularity, and which began—

“ I'd rather have a guinea than a one-pound note.”

The resumption of specie payments at the conclusion of the war was hailed with almost delirious enthusiasm by the public at large ; and he would be a bold statesman indeed who attempted to withdraw from circulation that gold which is held sacred among us and to substitute for it irredeemable paper.

Here I pause, not for lack of materials for further remarks on “ Now and Then in America,” but simply through a desire in the first place not to weary my readers, and in the next place not to be adjudged guilty of impertinence in dwelling at large on matters with which, looking at the brief duration of my stay on this continent, I can have only a very imperfect and superficial acquaintance.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.